



*Nurse practitioner Frances Brenner checks in on baby Lenni and mother Maria.*

Childhood obesity has doubled over the last thirty years—and low-income children are more likely to be overweight. The Farm to Preschool classes are just part of a broader anti-obesity health initiative that The Child Center is making throughout our early childhood programs. The initiative is anchored by a grant from BJ's Charitable Foundation, which has increased the hours and duties of the Head Start nurse practitioner and the master's level nutritionist.

Now, we will be able to screen all families in our Head Start programs for health problems, including obesity, diabetes and high blood pressure, providing extra care for those who need it. Our nutritionist will help Head Start staff establish healthy eating habits and menus. Our food service manager, who helped bring Farm to Preschool to Woodside, will continue to keep the focus on fresh, healthy fare.

At the end of Mohammad's class, which included tips on healthy ingredients and portion size, the group sampled the salad, nodding in approval. Maribel, a mother of two who has attended every class, said the classes gave her new ideas for family meals. Marie, a young woman who came with a friend, asked to take home the leftover dill.

"In our programs, we have a wonderful opportunity to get children started on the right path from a very early age," said Linda Rodriguez, the associate executive director of The Child Center's early childhood programs. "By establishing healthy eating habits and addressing health issues, we can help the whole family live better and avoid illness."



*Kimberly Quintero measures beans during a Farm to Preschool class.*

## Growing Strong, Growing Healthy

"Who would like to help me make this salad?" the class instructor asked. In the front row, Kimberly Quintero, age 7, waved her arm eagerly. The instructor, Mohammad Haq, was part of Farm to Preschool, a national nutrition program that The Child Center of NY has brought to our Head Start in Woodside, Queens. He was teaching a group of mothers and children to make coleslaw, and he helped as Kimberly mixed fresh dill with grated cabbage and carrots.

## ON THE RECORD: *Learning to love school*

With Queens United Middle School last school year, we piloted an extended-day program, MS ExTRA. All students stayed until 5pm daily, choosing from classes including technology and the arts. We got great results and will expand this year.

**98%** of students felt that MS ExTRA helped them grow as a person.

**80%** of students agreed that their MS ExTRA classes made them want to come to school.

Out of **7** electives, students loved an average of **6** classes each.

## From the CEO and Executive Director **Traci Donnelly**

Creating strong communities takes all of us—city leaders, community partners, families, and kids. Too often the conversation centers on problems instead of solutions. But by working together, we can build on our strengths.

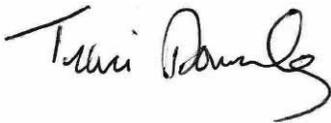
We can start by investing in communities, with family services and skilled support for every step of the journey. To make sure that neighborhoods are getting the services they need, we're partnering with organizations to lend our expertise and improve access to resources like counseling and health care.

The communities we work with are the building blocks of a strong city. In the last few months, we've seen exciting opportunities throughout New York City. We're serving on the mayor's advisory committee for community schools, helping bring a successful model to new corners of New York. We've reached out to the business community, suggesting they partner with nonprofits to help low-income students build career skills. And when I visited Rikers Island with LL Cool J and Russell Simmons this summer, I saw how powerful their message of change was for those young men.

In our programs, we urge kids to explore worlds beyond the ones that they know, and we help them find the ways to do it. We find that when kids thrive in their families and neighborhoods, they often return to give back to the very programs that made a difference in their own lives.

As we strengthen the fabric of the neighborhoods and the city, it becomes possible for kids to find their place. The city will give them experience and opportunity—and they will give back their energy, talent, and enthusiasm.

Warmly,



*Traci with Russell Simmons and Erica Ford, founder of LIFE Camp, Inc., an organization that prevents youth violence.*



## **For the Mayor, a Helping Hand**

When Mayor de Blasio wanted to find an innovative way to help at-risk kids, he called on experts throughout the city to help him. One of those experts was Deepmalya Ghosh, The Child Center's associate executive director of youth development and community engagement. Ghosh was appointed to the mayor's Community School Advisory Board, working this summer with de Blasio and 48 other local leaders to plan for the creation of 100 "community schools" in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods.

*Deepmalya Ghosh* For kids to thrive in school and every part of their lives, they need the active support of their families and communities. Community schools are designed to foster that support by serving as hubs for a comprehensive range of services for the whole family: access to quality health care, mental health counseling, homework help and tutoring, and community activities, among others. In New York City, the first 40 will be piloted in existing schools that have the city's lowest attendance rates.

To develop the community schools, said de Blasio in a statement, "we are turning to the people who know how to make these models work best." Ghosh, who oversees The Child Center's youth development programs, knows firsthand how well the community model works: The Child Center's early childhood and after school programs are based on it. Principles that guide our work today grew out of our experience with The Child Center's first community school, which Ghosh founded sixteen years ago in Flushing.

"We know that when we bring a neighborhood's best resources together under one roof," said Ghosh, "whole communities come together. School becomes a place where young people get engaged with learning, and families heal and grow."

# noteworthy

We're grateful to the **New York Community Trust**, which gave us a \$140,000 grant to help our clinics reach and treat even more children in crisis. With this support, we will continue to reduce the need for traumatic, costly hospital stays.

The **Harvard Business Review** published an op-ed by our CEO, Traci Donnelly, calling for a partnership between business leaders and nonprofits to get our nation's youth job-ready. "If businesses are serious about securing a stable pool of future employees," wrote Donnelly, "they are going to have to invest in young people more comprehensively and earlier." Read more at <http://bit.ly/bridgetheskillgap>

A big thanks to **Google Ad Grants** for their donation of training to our youth development staff this spring. Our staff learned ways to prepare kids for 21st century jobs with valuable computer skills and online resources.



## Back to School Means Back to Work

The Child Center is a major employer in the communities we serve. At our after school programs we provide jobs for nearly 500 youth workers, many who came up through these programs themselves. Elisa Pimentel (above) attended PS 89 as a child, and later put herself through college with a job as a youth worker there. Her home life was hard, and the path wasn't always easy. "Some days, I would be crying the whole day," she says. "But then I'd go to work. It gave me peace to come here and work with kids." Now, she directs PS 89's after school program. "Working with the kids pushed me to finish school," says Pimentel. "I saw the need, and I wanted to help."

# THE NEW GIVING



*Caroline Bal (right) and Pam Boneparth head The Child Center's Junior Outreach Committee.*

## GREAT FUN FOR A GREAT CAUSE

A couple of years ago, Russ Carson, a partner at private equity firm Welsh, Carson, Anderson and Stowe, encouraged employees to give back to their communities. As a philanthropist and supporter of The Child Center of NY, Carson spoke from experience. One of the firm's associates, Caroline Boneparth, took his encouragement to heart. Boneparth got together with a small group of her friends to raise funds and awareness for The Child Center.

Boneparth, it turned out, was a passionate spokeswoman. Word spread rapidly, and within months, Boneparth and a fellow associate, Tom Woiteshek, were planning events that were attended by Boneparth's colleagues as well as by acquaintances from companies around the city, all with the same goal: to turn a good time into great support for our programs.

The events are now a fixture on the fundraising scene. Currently headed by Caroline's sister Pam and another Welsh Carson associate, Caroline Bal, the Junior Outreach Committee meets a few times a year to plan the two major annual events: a dodgeball tournament at Chelsea Piers in December and the Sunset Social, a rooftop cocktail party in the spring.

"In college, philanthropy usually means volunteering," says Bal. "But that kind of hands-on involvement is not as easy when you are working a full-time job. Events like these are a really good way to raise money as well as raise awareness of the needs in the community."

The group is notable not just for its friendly, lively gatherings but for the dedication it inspires. "It's one thing to get people come to events," says Pam Boneparth. "But the people who come really care about The Child Center's work. There is so much loyalty."

**To learn more about our Junior Outreach activities, or to find out how to plan an event of your own, contact Jennifer Dudley, Director of Development, at (718) 651-7770 x301, or by email at [jenniferdudley@childcenterny.org](mailto:jenniferdudley@childcenterny.org).**

# CASE IN POINT

## *In their new country, a mother and her family struggle to find their place*

When Nasrin first came to Queens from Bangladesh, she felt desperately alone. She struggled to adjust to the unfamiliar streets, few friends, and a language and customs she didn't understand.

Life at home was difficult, too. Her husband threatened and belittled her. Haseen, their son, acted out aggressively, hitting Nasrin and other children, including his younger sister Zarin, who became painfully shy and withdrawn.



*Nasrin with her children Haseen and Zarin.*

In her neighborhood in Woodside, Queens, Nasrin had often passed by The Child Center's Head Start program, and when Haseen was old enough, she enrolled him there. Like everyone enrolling in our Head Start programs, Nasrin and her family were assigned a caseworker.

At the orientation, Nasrin learned about services for families facing abuse. In the situations they described, she realized that she recognized herself. She asked her caseworker to help her.

The caseworker referred Nasrin to one of our counselors who met with her weekly, helping Nasrin find ways to cope with the tension at home and the emotionally abusive relationship with her husband. Gradually, Nasrin began to find ways to assert herself, taking her children on errands and making decisions for the family.

We also referred Nasrin to one of our preventive workers, who met weekly with Nasrin at home and in the clinic, to make sure she and her children were safe and doing well. Nasrin's counselors helped her manage her depression and explore her strengths. They also reached out to her husband, to offer support and counseling resources.



*Nasrin reads with Haseen.*

At Head Start, Haseen, now 5, began to respond to the caring attention of his teachers, and began to take responsibility for his actions, no longer picking fights or running away from his mother. By the end of the year, his scores on the social emotional test given to all students had improved dramatically. Zarin, too, was opening up and becoming more independent.

As both her children went through the Head Start program, Nasrin, who has a master's degree from Bangladesh, had time to take ESL classes and begin working toward her college degree. Though she once felt she had no options, she has regained much of her old confidence. Her goal is to get a job within the next year.

"When I first came to America, I was so disappointed," says Nasrin. "I thought, this is not the America I've heard about. But now, I see opportunity. I feel very strong.

"I want to show my children that everything is possible in life," she says. "I will be the example of that."

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**The Child Center of NY is a 61-year-old nonprofit agency whose mission is to help at-risk children and youth succeed in life. To make a donation, visit [www.childcenterny.org](http://www.childcenterny.org) or call 718.651.7770 ext. 301.**

# Field Notes: Building Strong Communities



*Students celebrate their successful summer program under the banner they made.*

to express the dedication, support and sincere caring of this program and staff," wrote one parent in a thank-you note, remarking on the profound change in her son over the summer.

In addition to finding new friends and mentors, the kids forged a real connection to a place halfway around the world. "To know that they were helping others—that was really important to them," said Saher Mahmood, the program's director.

## A Small World After All

"We'll build a better world—for all the little boys and girls," sang Emme Aviles and her friends, elementary school students in The Child Center's summer program at PS 273.

The students composed the song as part of an Africa-focused curriculum and fundraiser. They studied leadership, culture, and family relationships in six African countries, and raised money to help build a school in a South African village.

At the joyful final performance, students chanted, danced, and sang, to cheers from parents and friends. "There are no words

## Ready to Meet the World

On a recent afternoon in Queens, a roomful of high school students were practicing their handshakes. Some gazed shyly at the floor. Others stepped forward eagerly.

It was the weekly meeting of JobNet Career Club, a new job counseling program at The Child Center, and employment specialist Ira Davison was going over basic interview skills. "Eye contact!" he encouraged.

Career Club helps youth age 16 to 21 find a foothold in the working world. The program is specifically designed for young people who have struggled with social and emotional issues including family conflict, anxiety, and substance abuse. The program offers resume advice and workplace skills like good communication, and matches participants with internships at local businesses, which often lead to permanent positions.

"We want to give these kids chances and choices to better themselves," says Davison, whose jokes and energetic presence



draw out even the shyest participants. Though new, the program has been successful: Nearly 70% of participants found internships.

*Ira Davison (center) coaches Wendy Rivera and Alexander Mighty in a mock interview.*



## Expanding Our Reach

From the western edge of Queens, the Manhattan skyline looks close enough to touch. But Manhattan's prosperity has not reached across the river, where neighborhoods have faced poverty for generations.

Zone 126, a nonprofit that works with families here to end poverty, wanted to provide expert, experienced counseling for the area's schoolchildren. So they enlisted The Child Center, which placed its licensed clinical social workers in schools in Astoria and Long Island City.

This collaboration lets The Child Center reach another area of great need. And by working with organizations like Zone 126 and the families they serve, we strengthen communities and support long-lasting change.

"We are so honored to have The Child Center of NY as a partner here," said Maritza Arroyo, the executive director of Zone 126. "They bring years of experience and proven results in approaching the complex challenges our children and families are facing."

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*Fourth-grader Godson Massene plays the piano in a recording session at one of our summer programs.*

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